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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [KMCA](#) [EAID](#) [EFIN](#) [ECON](#) [YM](#)
SUBJECT: SALEH ADVISOR TELLS AMBASSADOR THE PRESIDENT NOW
UNDERSTANDS THE MAGNITUDE OF HIS ERROR

REF: SANAA 1991

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (S) The Ambassador met November 3 with senior Presidential advisor AbdulKarim al-Eryani to discuss the case of Jamal al-Badawi and the recent meeting between the Ambassador and President Saleh. Eryani emphasized that the meeting was important insofar as it clarified for Saleh the magnitude of his error in releasing al-Badawi. Eryani also told the Ambassador that he considers Saleh's surrender program for extremists only about 50% effective but noted Saleh continues to believe in it. Eryani further added that President Saleh's deep disappointment at the delay of the MCC signing makes it a valuable bargaining chip. END SUMMARY

12. (S) In a one hour November 3 meeting, the Ambassador spoke with senior Presidential advisor AbdulKarim al-Eryani to discuss the case of Jamal al-Badawi and the Ambassador's October 29 meeting with President Saleh. Al-Eryani, who had attended the meeting (reftel), noted that it was very useful as a means to explain personally to President Saleh the depth of US feeling on the issue of Jamal al-Badawi. Eryani said that it was essential that Saleh heard directly from the Ambassador on this matter or he simply wouldn't have understood. (Note: This is evidence of the almost-complete absence of close advisors to Saleh who understand the US well enough to anticipate how his decisions will be greeted in Washington. End note.) Eryani added that Saleh now realizes what a bad mistake he made and that his behavior in the meeting revealed his natural reaction when he finds himself in a weak position, which is to attack.

13. (S) Al-Eryani said that his own opinion of the ROYG "surrender" program is that it is at best 50 percent effective. He said, however, it is the President's program, and he believes in it. Saleh's problem now is how to wiggle out of a commitment he undoubtedly made to Badawi and his supporters (Note: Eryani suggested that they are influential and could make life uncomfortable for Saleh, but declined to identify them. End Note.) The deal would probably have entailed an agreement that, if al-Badawi surrendered and agreed to help apprehend others, he would avoid going back to prison. Now, Saleh will have to renege on that deal, and the best political cover he has available to him is the very negative American reaction.

14. (S) Eryani suggested that Saleh will need to hear from the US again regarding the decision on the two options he presented during the October 29 meeting: allow Badawi to remain under house arrest and help the ROYG locate and apprehend other extremists, or return him to jail for the duration of his sentence and forget about any such gains. (Note: The Ambassador made abundantly clear on October 29 the US position that Badawi must remain in jail. End Note.)

Eryani suggested that this message be conveyed in a week or so; in the meantime, Eryani expressed confidence that Badawi will remain in jail. (Note: Since the FBI team is in place and ready to begin their interviews with Badawi this much seems certain, at least for the short term. End Note.)

¶15. (S) Eryani also suggested that the President's deep disappointment at the postponement of the MCC signing, and his strong desire to see it reinstated, makes the Threshold Program an effective bargaining chip, if used effectively. The Ambassador said that Yemen and the MCC are receiving such heavy scrutiny at the moment that it is unlikely the Threshold Program signing will be rescheduled anytime soon, although, he added, Yemen and the US need to work towards that goal. Eryani said it would be important for the President to hear this message directly, in order to encourage him to take the steps necessary to restore confidence lost as a result of this incident.

COMMENT

¶16. (S) Al-Eryani, who must be 70 by now, still impresses with his energy, insight and quick wit. He understands the President's thinking and is also one of the few advisors who are likely to have a hand in shaping that thinking. Regrettably, al-Eryani travels a great deal and, as a result, is often absent when Saleh - and we - could use his counsel
SECHE